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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how three elementary schools used effective schools research to institutionalize the school-improvement process and identifies the types and levels of the resources they used. Each school--one in the upper midwest, one in the midwest, and one in the eastern United States--had been involved in a school-improvement process for over 4 years and had a significant number of either low-income or non-Anglo students. Data were derived from document analysis; student performance data; interviews with teachers, parents, and all levels of administrators; and followup telephone interviews. Findings indicate that although the schools did not have large reserves of financial resources to support their implementation efforts, they used a variety of resources. Four types of resources were identified--financial, time, intellectual, and psychosocial. The following common patterns of resource use were found: (1) some money was available if people asked and were willing to use it wisely; (2) only small amounts of money may be needed to get started if there is social cohesion in the school and training is provided by the district; (3) in some settings, people often refrained from requesting large budgets; (4) "good faith" money and donated time by the district and principal may energize others to give of themselves and their time; (5) support and trust are key psychosocial resources; and (6) additional resources may be necessary when schools implement larger restructuring efforts. (LMI)

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Institutionalization of Change in a Period of Scarce Resources

April, 1993

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INTRODUCTION

Research on school improvement has been gaining increasing attention from policymakers and educators. As policymakers and educators attempt ways to restructure or change schools, attention to the problems of school improvement increases. One primary area concerns the conditions that encourage and facilitate long term school improvement. In an earlier paper (Peterson and Martin, 1992) we detailed the specific technical and symbolic processes used in the institutionalization of school improvement processes in three elementary schools. In this paper we focus on the resources that were used to support this effort.

Classic books by Louis and Miles (1990), Corbett, Dawson, and Firestone (1984), and the work of Fullan (1991) and others provide a detailed description of the nature and problems of school improvement efforts and some of the resources needed, however, seldom have researchers studied the ways that schools have used effective schools research to institutionalize change and improvement. In this study we draw on the earlier insights of those researchers and look at how three elementary schools institutionalized the school improvement process over several years and the types and levels of resources used to achieve that institutionalization. Potentially hundreds of schools across the United States have used the effective schools literature to begin programs of change and improvement (see Bullard and Taylor, 1992 for an account of this spread). The considerable diffusion of

these kinds of improvement programs across the United States in the late 1980s are seldom if ever studied. Additionally, little, if any, research has been done on the ways that programs for school improvement using effective schools research literature were actually institutionalized in various settings or the types of resources were used in this effort.

Statement of the Problem

The larger study from which these data are drawn examined the what long term school improvement based on effective schools tenets looks like, how it varies across schools, and how it becomes institutionalized in schools. This paper looks at the resources used in the improvement effort.

In this paper we focus on the variety of resources used in school improvement. We note the kinds of internal and external resources that came to bear and were available to three "everyday" schools that were institutionalizing school improvement. These "everyday" schools are schools that had multi-cultural populations, some resources for improvement efforts, and no major ongoing problems or crises at the school level.

Interestingly, we discovered that the process of school improvement used a variety of resources, but did not have large reserves of financial resources to support the improvement effort. This is not to say that in some school settings or with particular instructional changes, financial resources are not

essential to improvement and implementation. What we find in these schools is that the resources came from many sources, were relatively small, and were often contributed by the teachers, parents, and central office people of the district.

Rationale

Why is it important to examine resources used for the institutionalization of school improvement? First, if extensive implementation is to be successful we need to understand the types and levels of resources used for change and improvement. Second, school improvement based on effective schools is infrequently studied with respect to specific resources in spite of the spread of this approach. Third, we have relatively few longitudinal or historical studies of the resources used for school improvement in relatively common, everyday schools. Finally, while other researchers (Louis and Miles, 1990, Corbett, Dawson, and Firestone, 1984) have noted the importance of resources, few have examined the types of resources used in the institutionalization of this process in everyday schools using effective schools programs.

Selected Review of the Literature

School improvement studies have been synthesized in the work of Corbett, Dawson, and Firestone (1984) and Fullan (1991). The literature notes a number of important stages in the improvement process starting with initiation, moving to implementation, and

ending with institutionalization, when the process becomes part of the ongoing system of organizational functioning (See Miles and Ekholm, 1991). At the point of institutionalization school improvement is an accepted part, a "taken-for-granted" and almost "invisible" aspect of the school (Miles and Ekholm, 1991). Prior literature (Louis and Miles, 1990) suggests that a variety of resources are needed to support change and improvement. Money, time, personnel, space, equipment, ideas, training, materials, consulting, support, and psychosocial resources are some of the many in a long list of needs to engage in a successful school improvement process. Relatively few studies have identified the resources used in institutionalizing improvement processes based on effective schools.

The process of school improvement is neither simple nor quick. One of the most useful analyses (Miles and Ekholm, 1991) points to seven complex factors in achieving institutionalization. These include policy level confirmation, vision building, external support, internal support, school leader attention to institutionalization, ownership and embedding. These seven factors were found in schools that moved from implementation to institutionalization stages. In a related study, Louis and Miles (1990), note several key factors in school improvement. These include evolutionary planning, school context, vision building, resources, and problem coping. They discovered that these features of the change process were associated with more successful change efforts in urban high

schools. In both of these major studies, resources of various types are noted as central to the process of institutionalization. These include such resources as money, support, knowledge, and time. We found similar resource patterns with important variations across schools.

Few scholars of school improvement would argue that resources are not important. But the nature and level of resources remains a complex question. In this study we found some surprisingly different patterns of resource usage in schools that had institutionalized school improvement. These resources were frequently less financial and more psychosocial in nature.

Design and Methodology

In an attempt to understand the complexities and processes involved in the institutionalization of school improvement, we chose a qualitative research approach. An exploratory, hypothesis-generating and descriptive case study approach provided the necessary venue for understanding a school improvement process as the participants understand it in their context (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Based on the literature on school change and improvement, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The literature provided a useful springboard for addressing previously identified constructs which enable successful school improvement. Since the literature on the institutionalization of the effective schools process is limited, this approach allowed interviews to

be free flowing and frequently move beyond the set questions as patterns and themes began to develop within and among cases.

This study focused on the school improvement process in elementary schools that began using the effective schools tenets, and have sustained improvement efforts for at least four years. These case studies of three elementary schools provide some initial themes and ideas about the nature of successful long term school improvement. This paper will give special attention to the most important resources identified in each case. Given the size of the sample and the preliminary nature of the research, these findings should be taken tentatively with attention to the sample size. In addition, this case study approach, by nature, is focused on resource usage and does not attempt to analyze the entire school and all its programs.

Population and Sample

There are many schools across the United States that use effective schools improvement efforts. For this study we examine three elementary schools that (1) have been engaged in long-term school improvement, (e.g. a process of school improvement that is ongoing, continuous, and routinized) for four years or more, (2) where there had been some reported improvement in student performance or other measure of student outcome, and (3) had specific change efforts focused on some feature of teaching and/or learning. We also wanted schools where some district support for change and improvement existed. Isolated schools are

often not successful without district support (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

A sample of three schools was drawn from across schools in the United States. Educators in state departments of education, school districts, and associations that foster school improvement were contacted to nominate schools that had been involved in long-term school improvement efforts for four years or more. We were also interested in schools that did not have unusual circumstances - eg. neither in severe crisis nor extraordinarily wealthy. Based on the initial nominations several schools were contacted, principals interviewed, and three visited. Interviews with school staff were conducted prior to selection of the final sample in order to determine whether criteria for inclusion were satisfied. Also, two of the three schools had initial site visits by researchers. While there were hundreds of potential nominations, only a relatively small number of districts and schools have been engaged for four years or more, shown improvement on performance, and were actively engaged in classroom level changes.

From the initial set of nominations three schools were identified; one in the upper midwest, one in the midwest, and one on the east coast. The schools were located in a midsize city, an ethnically mixed suburb of a large eastern city, and a low income mixed ethnic community outside a large metropolitan area. All of the schools had a significant number of either low income or non-Anglo students. Elementary schools were selected to

reduce variability caused by type of school.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a number of approaches. The core data were collected by two researchers on site conducting intensive interviews with teachers, parents, and administrators at all levels in the school and district. These semi-structured interviews, lasting from 30 minutes to 2 hours, were conducted with individuals who had been involved in the school improvement effort during each stage of the process. All of the interviews were transcribed and used for analysis. Additionally, documents related to school improvement including plans, mission statements, and student performance data were gathered.

Demographic characteristics of the schools and the community were collected. Also, descriptions of the district office and district structure were examined. Where necessary, follow-up telephone interviews expanded the data base. The interview transcriptions provided hundreds of pages of information on the nature of the process, the obstacles and opportunities for improvement, and the resources used in the improvement effort.

Data Analysis

Data from the three case studies were analyzed separately and collectively to determine both unique and common resources contributing to successful school improvement efforts. A qualitative approach to the analysis attended to emerging themes

and patterns of resource use and type (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Yin, 1989). Initial themes related to school improvement and the type of re sources used were identified from the data and from prior literature. [We] sought to understand the features of school improvement, institutionalization, and the resources used over several years in the process.

As the research team moved from one case to the next [we] sought to identify new or emerging themes that could be of use in understanding this process and the resources necessary for institutionalization. In the final analysis all interview transcriptions were reexammined with respect to specific patterns of r esource use identified by the respondents. Categories of resources were identified and further analyzed resulting in four general patterns of resource use. The patterns of resources in each school are reported in this paper.

Potential Limitations

This exploratory study looks intensively at the institutionalization of improvement efforts and the resources applied to those efforts in three elementary schools (See Peterson and Martin, 1992). The findings, while illustrative of some features of resource use, should be taken tentatively. Given the small sample there are potential problems of generalization and extrapolation. Additionally, there is always the potential limitation of attribution, inaccurate memory on the part of the participants, and retrospective rationalization.

Also, a sample of comparable, non-improving schools was not included and thus comparisons between improving and non-improving schools cannot be identified.

In spite of these limitations, the patterns do suggest issues and themes that further research can and should investigate and that practitioners might consider as they attempt to institutionalize improvement in their settings. This study illuminates the importance of examining the ways that multiple types of resources can foster the institutionalization of improvement in everyday schools.

Findings

In the larger study, seven themes emerged which seem to contribute to successful long term school improvement - evolutionary planning, collaborative vision building, problem finding and problem coping, context, resources, early emphasis on instruction, and leadership from several sources (see Peterson and Martin, 1992). In this paper we would like to concentrate on the resources used by these three elementary schools that resulted in successful long term school improvement which began with the effective schools process.

Four patterns of resources were found in these schools: financial, time, intellectual and psychosocial (Louis and Miles, 1990) resources. These patterns were not exactly the same in each school, but each provide clear examples of how to begin developing improvement processes without an influx of significant

new resources.

Lincoln Elementary

Some financial resources are necessary to engage in school improvement. In the Lincoln School district a number of small incentives were provided to encourage schools to embark on a plan for school improvement. The district brought in a consultant to discuss the effective schools research, provided money for initial effective schools inservice for teachers, and as they moved away from the effective schools correlates they sent people to Northwest Labs to be trained. These people became trainers for the district.

The largest single financial contribution from the district were the funds provided for the school effectiveness team (SET) and other staff members to attend a five day program at a local university in the summer. The district spends $400 per person with 8-12 people attending annually. In addition, the district pays each participant 20 hours of planning time for their participation in the program. This is only provided for one school each year. This seems like a considerate amount of money to give to one building, but what no other school in the district has either asked or been committed enough to encourage a team to attend. Lincoln Elementary has taken advantage of this summer program for four years. The district provides additional money for inservice speakers as requested and needed.

The district also provides money for substitute teachers for a variety of activities that encourage and facilitate active school improvement efforts. This money is specifically targeted for substitutes that will provide the teachers with time to work on school improvement. Up to three half days of substitutes each year for the SET are provided and the assistant superintendent recently announced a budget to hire substitutes for teachers who wish to visit other schools to observe.

The district budget process provides the principal with a set amount of money per student each year for supplies. The principal requests a supply wish list from each staff member. The principal observed that the teachers "don't request things over and above what I'm able to give generally." One teacher noted that "We obviously don't ask for the moon, but I don't think anybody's not gotten something." Because the staff is conservative with their requests the principal is left with $3-$4,000 of flexible money. Again, this is not a lot of money but enough to accommodate unexpected requests and needs.

The key to the financial resource allocation seems to be the perception that as much money as you need is available. The culture of the district and Lincoln Elementary is such that they only ask for what they need. The district and the principal have created an atmosphere whereby teachers feel free to ask for financial resources, but they never ask for anything excessive. The belief that one can have anything one needs to improve schools seems to be enough to keep the teachers striving for

continuous school improvement. But where do the teachers find the time to work on school improvement?

Time is a valuable resource in schools, particularly for those teachers who wish to work on school improvement. As noted above, the district has provided substitutes to enable teachers to work together. They have also rearranged the weekly schedule to allow for early release every Wednesday. By adding 10 minutes to each day students leave school early on Wednesdays allowing the teachers to use the afternoon to work in groups.

Lincoln Elementary seems to use their time more efficiently than before. At the beginning there was the usual concern that this process would take too much time away from their classroom work. However, they quickly found that it enhanced their work with children. The time given by the district was enough to encourage the teachers to spend more of their own time in a more focused manner. They spend time sharing ideas with other teachers. The staff has breakfast together every Friday morning and have developed collegial study groups. These groups read research together on specific issues of concern and then talk together about solutions to common problems in their classrooms. These groups meet during school hours around teacher schedules.

As in most schools, the staff works beyond the school day. Many arrive early in the morning and remain a few hours after school. While this is their time,they believe it is part of their job and they seem to enjoy doing it. The symbolism of district personnel and the principal putting in many hours seems to

energize the teachers to do the same. There is the feeling that they are "all in this together" and the teachers seem to view the limited time provided as "good faith." They use the time wisely and do not resent spending additional time working on projects that will reinforce their commitment to "doing the best for the children."

Intellectual support is provided by the district office, the principal and colleagues in the school. The district provided the stimulus for schools to begin a school improvement process. The superintendent initially developed a voluntary district-wide study group of principals to learn about effective schools and exchange ideas about school improvement. This has evolved into an active group of all principals and chairs of SET's. They meet monthly to exchange ideas, provide encouragement and share successes.

The district office has always been supportive of school improvement efforts by consistently focusing on academic achievement, providing knowledge and materials, inservice monies, and workshops for new team members. Without dictating the composition of teams or mandating specific programs, the district has encouraged and supported a variety of school improvement efforts. While they demand that each school focus on school improvement they don't prescribe what to do.

In Lincoln Elementary, teachers and the principal share experiences, research articles, information learned at workshops, and classroom observations. The teachers want access to

knowledge and have found that by developing a culture which includes sharing as opposed to competition, one can learn a great deal more. The culture that developed at this school is one of the most important resources that ties people together in a nonthreatening, productive environment focused on school improvement.

Lincoln Elementary has developed significant psychosocial resources and a culture which supports sharing and not competition. It encourages risk , recognizes the good qualities of the school and is committed to continuous improvement. Teachers in this school have opened the doors to their classrooms to share ideas with others. Since the introduction of the school effectiveness team teachers share more as a group. They feel comfortable offering suggestions or disagreeing with the principal without being ridiculed or punished.

Risk taking is routine, not novel. The staff is constantly trying new things, "...even 'old folks' are changing with us [they are] not reluctant to try new things." As one teacher remarked, "I think we're not afraid to try something, that's the thing, if it doesn't work, well fine ... we gamble. This atmosphere of experimentation is encouraged by the principal but he does not push people to change if they are not ready.

Teachers view Lincoln Elementary as a good school despite its high needs population. However, they are continuously trying to find ways to improve teaching and learning for the children. As one teacher remarked, "we are all in this to do the best we

can for the kids we've got." And the principal reflected, "I think school improvement is part of our culture."

One of the major psychosocial resources is the professionalism of the staff. The principal treats teachers like professionals, reminds them of their professional status and doesn't watch over them constantly. This contributes to high morale and seems to foster independent thinking and intellectual development. As one teacher noted, "There's a high morale here because of the way we treat each other and the principal treats us, I think that that may transcend other structures that are in place."

Some financial resources are necessary to begin and to encourage schools to engage in school improvement. But successful long term improvement at Lincoln Elementary has relied on other resources. The "good faith" time provided by the district and the principal act as a stimulus for teachers to go above and beyond that which is provided. The intellectual support initially prompted by the district research efforts and inservice training has developed into teachers sharing their own strengths and learning from colleagues. Finally, Lincoln Elementary, through the process of school improvement, has developed a strong culture replete with psychosocial resources that encourage sharing, risk taking, and continuous improvement strengthened by the professional status of the teachers.

Williamson Elementary

Similar to Lincoln, Williamson Elementary did receive some financial resources from the district. The actually dollars seem to be quite low for a school that has developed a successful long term, ongoing, school improvement process. This is particularly laudable in this district where state and local dollars have been dwindling at a rapid pace.

The district provided financial support to hire presenters on a variety of approaches to school improvement, for planning meetings at a local hotel, for substitutes to cover classes so team members could meet or for teachers to attend conferences. Initially four presenters were brought in to discuss specific school improvement strategies to the principal and a teacher from each school. These individuals brought these ideas back to their schools for consideration. Williamson Elementary decided on the effective schools process which was launched by state consultants who spent three days with a volunteer Action Planning Team (APT) at a local hotel. The district paid for the hotel facilities and for meals. While many teachers were impressed and grateful for the money, the assistant superintendent did not view this as a large expense. He estimated the cost at about $150 per school, a small price to pay for what resulted, successful planning sessions.

There is also money in the budget for substitutes to cover school improvement efforts, specifically the APT's initial three day meeting, which has evolved into a day in the fall and a day

in the spring, coverage for teachers who have been approved to attend conferences or workshops, and substitute support for teachers who want to visit other schools.

Other monetary resources used to support the school improvement efforts are neglible. Newly created activities provide small rewards to motivate students. The reward of a pencil or a "Good News" card sent to the student's home from the principal encourage students to improve. A simple chart ("Homework Hall of Fame") outside the principal's office recognizes those who have done their homework regularly. It is creativity with a small amount of seed money (some generated from the PTA) that seems to have contributed to ongoing school improvement at Williamson Elementary. The staff seems to have the amount of money it feels it needs. They also have the time.

Williamson Elementary has been given <u>time</u> to concentrate on planning and school improvement. The first APT was a volunteer group. While no one actively tried to sabotage or destroy their work, some were concerned about the time this project would involve. They were less skeptical as the process began when they realized that the central office and the principal were prepared to give much of their time and to arrange for faculty to meet during school hours to plan. The assistant superintendent estimates that he spent 25% of his time working with individual schools on the effective schools process during the first two years. The principal appears to have integrated the process into her work so deeply that it is not seen as a separate entity.

Time provided through the use of substitutes and scheduling adjustments enables teachers to meet together. Working collectively has minimized the time necessary to complete tasks. The principal also arranged schedules allowing grade levels to meet once a week during school hours when their students were engaged in out of classroom activities. Unlike Lincoln Elementary, teachers were not paid for planning time, but most were willing to make the time when they began to see how working collectively would minimize the individual time commitment. There is a sense that everyone contributes, and an understanding that some people have more time to give than others. As one teacher remarked, "I never have the sense that there is anyone comparing their contribution versus another person's contribution." The original volunteer APT members contributed significant time to this effort at the beginning and while their contribution is still greater than that of others, they admit that the workload has decreased due to the expertise they have developed about the process - they have "settled into the process."

Available time for planning and training has not substantially increased at Williamson Elementary, but the time is used more productively by being more focused. Inservice days are serious work days for committees as well as APT members. The staff appreciates the time that is allotted for planning. Like the teachers at Lincoln Elementary,they do not complain about extra time largely because they see the school improvement effort as a collaborative undertaking which includes the serious,

visible and extensive time expended by the district office and the principal.

Intellectual support was provided by the state, district, principal and colleagues. The state provided for free the expertise of its effective schools consultants to any school who requested their assistance. These consultants provided tools and encouragement that contributed to the initiation and implementation of the effective schools process in Williamson Elementary. They were consistently cited as individuals who were "dedicated," "knowledgeable," "sincere," and "nonthreatening." Their attitude was "how can I help you?" Their support was evident in the attention they gave to the school, the rapid response rate to questions and concerns, and their continuous involvement with the process throughout the first two years.

The district distributes information on new ideas, offers workshops, and provides forums for information exchange between schools within the district. More importantly, the superintendent and his assistant are open to new ideas related to school improvement and provide support and encouragement without mandating specific programmatic reforms.

The principal also provides intellectual support through her attention to current research as it relates to existing programs and those under consideration. She provides research, articles, and information on workshops and conferences that may be of interest to the staff. She also provides forums for the staff to meet and discuss common concerns, exchange ideas, and to discuss

current research and its connection to practice in the school. Her initiatives have created an atmosphere of sharing among colleagues. The principal treats teachers as professionals and they in turn have responded enthusiastically to the challenges and expectations of taking an active role in the success of the entire school.

Williamson Elementary developed psychosocial resources which include a change in organizational norms seemingly more conducive to successful long term improvement efforts. A culture of collegiality is present in Williamson Elementary. Teachers and the principal share ideas regularly and work in an environment that is cooperative as opposed to competitive. The principal is regarded as the catalyst in the success of school improvement yet she is not a top-down leader who dictates what needs to be done. She enables the staff to work together productively, primarily by treating teachers as professionals and allowing them to take risks.

Teachers at Williamson Elementary feel like professionals. The principal has given them the opportunity to make meaningful decisions concerning their work life and they have enthusiastically contributed. The process and the principal's spirit have "revitalized" many long tenured teachers who acknowledge a renewed energy in their work. There is a sense that we are all in this together both at the building level and the district level. "I think it's brought the staff closer together. There's been a lot of cooperation and sharing." It

seems that teachers are concerned both with the outcomes of their individual classes and the outcomes of the school as a whole unit.

The school board, the PTA and the community respond more readily to school requests, and participate more actively in the school. At the beginning of the process, an entire board meeting was set aside to explain the effective schools process so they were aware of what was going on. Additionally, the assistant superintendent and the principal frequently update the board on the progress of school improvement efforts in the district. This process seems to have brought the district together. The PTA, once headed by a teacher because of limited parental involvement, has grown significantly and is now led by a parent who has the needed support from other parents. People from the community are always willing to come into the school and as one teacher remarked "it's a community you can be proud to be a teacher in."

One interviewee noted that these psychosocial resources seem to be largely responsible for the momentum, and hypothesized that perhaps the "time was right" for people in the community to become involved. A little push, and some creative strategies employed by the staff to include more people in school activities was all that was needed for involvement to escalate.

In sum, some financial resources were necessary to initiate, implement and institutionalize the school improvement process at Williamson Elementary. The state and the district provided money

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for inservice, substitute coverage, and to purchase materials. Time was provided by the principal through scheduling adjustments and substitute coverage. The available time has not significantly increased, but it is more focused and used more productively by the staff. Intellectual support, in the form of state consultants, districtwide meetings for information exchange, and principal attention to research relevant to practice and current school projects has created an atmosphere of learning. Finally, the psychosocial resources have supported organizational norms which seems to be more conducive to successful school improvement efforts. Williamson Elementary is a school where collegiality, cooperation, and professionalism flourish in an environment where community, district and principal support nurture these values.

Smith Elementary

With a small infusion of new financial resources, Smith Elementary has been able to initiate, implement and to some extent institutionalize a process of continuous school improvement. The district provided initial assistance from an outside consultant to train people in the process of effective schools. Once initiated into the process, the consultant acted as a motivator to keep the School Leadership Team (SLT) on task and monitor their progress over two years.

Ongoing financial support from the district in the form of substitutes for meetings, training of new team members, and

workshop opportunities at the district level allow teachers to develop new skills within school hours without feeling completely overburdened. In lieu of substitutes, teachers who chose to take workshops in the summer are provided a small stipend for their participation. They also provide substitute teachers for consultation meetings with teachers, social workers and others to discuss alternatives, and develop strategies, for assisting specific difficult children.

The principal at Smith Elementary is annually provided with a $2000 discretionary fund from the district. This allows the principal to funnel money to inservice, additional substitutes, a luncheon or breakfast, resource materials or anywhere he believes additional funds would be useful.

Another useful source of funding comes from grants. The director of curriculum and instruction is seen as "creative" when it comes to procuring money for projects. In addition, the district offers mini-grants directly to teachers who are interested in developing new units. Proposals are submitted and reviewed by the district and awards are upwards of $500. This incentive program gives teachers an opportunity to experiment with new ideas and the district is provided with a report and materials that can be used by all teachers in the district.

As with the other two schools, people are encouraged to ask for anything they think they may need. The assistant principal is always telling teachers to "ask for anything... the worst that anybody can tell you is no." It appears that teachers have

realistic expectations and are not discouraged because of the limited resources. These limited resources are useful but time seems to be an equally valuable commodity.

Time is provided by the principal and the district to encourage and assist Smith Elementary in its improvement process. However, it is not as prevalent as it is in Lincoln and Williamson. As mentioned, Smith is given the financial resources to hire substitute teachers thus enabling teachers to meet as a group to discuss issues during school hours. While this minimal support encourages teachers to put in extra effort outside of the allotted time, many feel that they need more time. Part of this pressure for more time is related to the change in lunch hour.

When the superintendent instituted a hot lunch program in the schools, the lunch break for teachers was significantly reduced. One teacher explained that the lunch break of about one hour and a half when she first began teaching at the school, (allowing students to go home for lunch) was being whittled away so that now it is only 43 minutes and there is only 15-20 minutes of overlap time between primary and intermediate teachers. This takes away from the casual exchange of ideas that many teachers, and the principal, feel are useful and important.

Teachers recognize the district and principal efforts to give of their time and to try to find time for teachers. This "good faith" effort seems to provide the necessary motivation for teachers to spend more of their own time working on school improvement projects. As is common, teachers are unevenly

willing to change. There is a critical mass of individuals who were willing to volunteer their time at the beginning and now more and more of the staff are willing to participate.

The district, principal and staff have provided intellectual resources in a collective effort to improve Smith Elementary. The district provided the initial catalyst by bringing in an effective schools consultant and training people in the district. Participants recall the deluge of research and training materials presented to them and the support of the consultant in helping them focus on important issues. Those trained, shared their knowledge with the staff and interest grew. When teachers were presented with research that showed improvement, they became more intrigued and thus more willing to take some risks and change.

The ongoing staff development provided by the district continues to underscore their commitment to improvement based on research knowledge. In addition, they rely on the strengths of the district personnel. By providing a small stipend to teachers willing to present workshops in their areas of expertise, the district recognizes the importance of intellectual exchange among members of the district.

The principal in Smith Elementary does not seem as active in the dissemination and explanation of research as the principals in the other two schools, but it may be because he was in his first year as principal at Smith. Described as a supportive leader with a collegial style, this principal did not want to appear as though he were forcing people to do new things. He

made suggestions, but let the teachers decide. He has fostered an environment where risk taking and sharing are normative.

Smith Elementary has the least cohesive program of school improvement of the three schools in this study, but it has created an environment of psychosocial support which seems to have enabled creativity to flourish. The current atmosphere encourages risk taking, stresses collaborative work and has been the process has become part of their work lives. They too have "settled into the process." Both the district and the principal support risk taking activities in the name of school improvement and do not penalize people who have tried and failed. As one teacher explained, "We were encouraged to try and if it didn't work, then talk to somebody who's tried something else and get it to work. [We] try to really stress collaborativeness."

Despite the self described "maverick school" with "a lot of strong personalities", the staff at Smith Elementary have developed a collaborative spirit. As one teacher illuminated, "... people are much more cooperative with each other ... I think it's fostered a great deal of camaraderie and spirit, and a feeling that we are lucky to work in the kind of environment that we do." Another teacher offered, "I guess we just [understand] that working together is a lot easier than working separately." There is a clear sense of "staff harmony" making it easier to communicate with each other, experiment with change, and create an atmosphere that fosters an attitude of "we're all in this together."

Smith Elementary has been able to begin a process of institutionalized school improvement with the influx of some new financial resources. Financial support in the form of extensive staff development programs, mini-grants for teachers, and substitute teacher coverage for meetings has enabled and encouraged ongoing school improvement. Time to plan and meet with other teachers was less available in Smith Elementary, but the limited time made available by the district and the principal seems to be more focused and productive than in the past. Intellectual support was mostly provided by the district's focus on staff development programs and the teachers' willingness to share ideas with colleagues. Finally, while Smith Elementary has the least cohesive program of school improvement, it has the psychosocial support seemingly necessary for successful institutionalization. Support from the district, the principal and teachers assisted in developing norms of risk-taking, cooperation and harmony which facilitates ongoing school improvement efforts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These three schools were able with a combination of financial, temporal, intellectual and psychosocial resources to initiate, implement, and institutionalize a school improvement process. While the total amount of financial resources available to these schools was relatively small, the other types of resources were often substantial. Nonetheless, the school

improvement process became institutionalized in these three settings.

Some common patterns of resource use were found in these schools. First, some money was available if people asked and were willing to use it wisely. Second, only small amounts of money may be needed to get started if there is social cohesion in the school and training is provided by the district. Third, in some settings, people often don't ask for large budgets; they only request funds for smaller projects. Fourth, "good faith" money and donated time by the district and principal may energize others to give of themselves and their time. Fifth, psychosocial resources must come from district, principal and staff in order for the process to work effectively. Support and trust are key resources. Finally, additional resources may be necessary when schools take on larger and more substantial efforts at restructuring or instructional transformation. Additional resources, as Louis and Miles (1990) found, may also be needed where schools exist in a context where extensive training, time, and trust have been in short supply.

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